

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 EUR-12 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
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P R 031555Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7227
INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 892

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PROP, PINT, SF
SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SCANDALS

REF: (A) CAPE TOWN A-18, (B) CAPE TOWN 830,

1. MINISTER OF INFORMATION CONNIE MULDER TOLD PARLIAMENT THE AFTERNOON OF MAY 3 THAT HE WAS REQUESTING THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION TO INSTITUTE A STUDY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION WITH A VIEW TOWARD TOTALLY REORGANIZING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT AGENCY WITHOUT CABINET STATUS, SIMILAR TO THE U.S. OR BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICES. MULDER ALSO ANNOUNCED A TEMPORARY REORGANIZATION OF THE DEPARTMENT, WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE "RETIREMENT" OF TWO TOP OFFICIALS, DEPUTY SECRETARY DENEYS RHOODIE AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER WALDECK, BOTH OF WHOM HAVE BEEN NAMED FREQUENTLY IN CONNECTION WITH THE EMERGING SCANDALS IN THE DEPARTMENT. MULDER INDICATED THAT THE TEMPORARY REORGANIZATION WOULD NOT AFFECT ESCHER RHOODIE, THE DEPARTMENT'S SECRETARY, WHOSE NAME HAS ALSO BEEN CLOSELY LINKED WITH THE SCANDAL.

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2. COMMENT: MULDER'S ANNOUNCEMENT WAS CLEARLY AIMED AT MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF THE SPREADING DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SCANDALS PRIOR TO THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE SUBJECT SCHEDULED FOR MAY 8. THE PLAN TO REORGANIZE THE DEPARTMENT AND END ITS STATUS AS A FULL-FLEDGED MINISTRY IS SEEN AS AN ATTEMPT BY MULDER TO AVOID THE HUMILIATION OF HANDING THE PORTFOLIO TO

ANOTHER MINISTER. INITIAL SPECULATION IS THAT THE NEW INFORMATION AGENCY, WHEN FORMED, IS LIKELY TO FALL UNDER THE PURVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WITH THE RESULT THAT MULDER'S LOSS WILL BE PIK BOTHA'S GAIN. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SURPRISE THAT MULDER OPTED NOT TO DISMISS ESCHEL RHOODIE, AGAINST WHOM THERE HAS BEEN MOUNTING EVIDENCE OF UNETHICAL ACTIVITIES, IF NOT CORRUPTION. MOST PARLIAMENTARY OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THIS DECISION WILL HAUNT MULDER, AND RESULT IN A CONTINUATION OF THE DAMAGING NEWS STORIES ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT. END COMMENT.

3. THE SUNDAY EXPRESS HAS AGREED FOR THE MOMENT, FOLLOWING A MEETING WITH CONNIE MULDER, NOT TO PUBLISH FURTHER REVELATIONS ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT'S ACTIVITIES, ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE INFORMATION MAY BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY. ATTORNEYS FOR THE EXPRESS ARE STUDYING THE POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS. MEANWHILE, PRESS REPORTS STATE THAT GENERAL HENDRIK VAN DEN BERGH, HEAD OF THE BUREAU OF STATE SECURITY (BOSS) ON MAY 2 DISCUSSED ASPECTS OF THE SCANDAL WITH MULDER AND THE RHOODIE BROTHERS. SPECULATION AMONG SOME JOURNALISTS IS THAT R30 MILLION IN DEFENSE MINISTRY FUNDS MAY HAVE BEEN SECRETLY TRANSFERRED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION FOR USE IN INFLUENCE BUYING AND OTHER OVERSEAS ACTIVITIES (REPAIR). THIS, THEY SAY, WOULD EXPLAIN BOTH
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VAN DEN BERGH'S INVOLVEMENT AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY ASPECTS OF THE CASE WHICH MAY BE INVOKED BY THE SAG TO PREVENT FURTHER REVELATIONS.
NELSON

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